

In Response to Sorenson's Petition for a Declaratory Ruling or Alternatively a Rulemaking Regarding Call Handling Obligations

As a deaf consumer of Video Relay Service, I am very grateful to be able to function as an independent person. Communication equivalence is so important to me and even though I use an interpreter, I want to have the same experience in my phone call that a person who hears would have. Whatever they experience, I want to experience too. The only difference between us is the ability to hear not the ability to experience whatever life throws at us.

Interpreters are trained to provide communication access, therefore in Video Relay Service settings, their role is to provide telecommunication access. Therefore, whatever happens in a phone call for a person who hears, we should be allowed to experience the same thing. People who can hear do not have someone involved with every call to monitor for any fraudulent or criminal activity. Deaf people should not be marginalized just because we need to use qualified sign language interpreters to be able to communicate on the phone. No one should be monitoring our phone conversations either. The interpreter's job is to interpret the call accurately.

Video Relay Service allows me to have access to telephone communication independently, in my native language, and take care of my personal business as my neighbors who can hear will do. If something should happen to people who can hear on the phone, such as being scammed by a fraudulent caller, it is bound to happen to a deaf caller, interpreters are not our protectors nor do we want them to be. We just want equal access as our hearing peers have.

We own our calls and it is our responsibility to be cautious. That includes identifying scams, frauds etc... In the world we live in, unfortunately those criminal activities are not limited to phone, and we do not have interpreter living with us 24 hours, 7 days a week to protect us from illegal activities. Buyers beware.

Please focus on educating the public about illegal/criminal activities on the phone. People who can hear and deaf people will benefit from it.